

**NEED TO INVEST FEDERAL FUNDING TO RELIEVE
TRAFFIC CONGESTION AND IMPROVE OUR
ROADS AND BRIDGES AT THE STATE AND
LOCAL LEVEL**

FIELD HEARING
BEFORE THE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION
AND INFRASTRUCTURE
OF THE
COMMITTEE ON
ENVIRONMENT AND PUBLIC WORKS
UNITED STATES SENATE

ONE HUNDRED FOURTEENTH CONGRESS

FIRST SESSION

JUNE 1, 2015—BATON ROUGE, LA

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NEED TO INVEST FEDERAL FUNDING TO RELIEVE TRAFFIC CONGESTION AND IMPROVE OUR ROADS AND BRIDGES AT THE STATE AND LOCAL LEVEL

MONDAY, JUNE 1, 2015

U.S. SENATE,
COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT AND PUBLIC WORKS,
SUBCOMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE,
Baton Rouge, LA.

The subcommittee met, pursuant to notice, at 10 a.m. in room 348, East Baton Rouge Parish Council Chamber, 222 St. Louis Street, Baton Rouge, Louisiana, Hon. David Vitter (chairman of the subcommittee) presiding.

Present: Senator Vitter.

OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. DAVID VITTER, U.S. SENATOR FROM THE STATE OF LOUISIANA

Senator VITTER. Good morning and thank you for joining me in Baton Rouge today for the Senate Transportation and Infrastructure Subcommittee hearing on the need to invest Federal funding to relieve traffic congestion and improve our roads and bridges at the State and local level.

We are talking about building infrastructure to relieve traffic congestion, and that just goes to basic quality of life issues. Particularly those of us who live in this part of the State certainly get being stuck in traffic and wasting valuable time as we try to get to work or bring kids to soccer or school or whatever else.

So it's a basic quality of life issue. It's an important safety issue. And it's an important economic issue. Because the more we have these tie-ups, we have lack of productivity, and, quite frankly, these bottlenecks can be a significant turnoff in terms of more jobs and economic development coming here.

As Chair of this Transportation and Infrastructure Subcommittee that I mentioned, I have been very focused on the Federal aspects of this problem. So last year, for instance, I worked with other key leaders to pass a Federal highway bill reauthorization. We put that together. It was a long-term bipartisan bill. We passed it through our committee, but it did not pass through the whole Congress. So we still have that work to do.

This year, I am redoubling those efforts, reaching out, working with other key leaders on putting together that highway bill extension. We have had a lot of short-term extensions. My goal is certainly for a medium- or long-term bill, 6 years, if at all possible,

because that gives us the stability to be able to plan and move forward in a really productive way.

Let me go to our slides now that illustrate some of the key issues we are talking about. First of all, a little bit of good news, we have a long way to go, but a little bit of good news. Since I have been involved working with others, because of the work of many folks, certainly not just me, we have been able to increase Louisiana's rate of return on the Federal gas tax.

So every time you fill up your car at the gas pump, you're paying a gas tax to the Feds and to the State. So this is the Federal gas tax, how much do we get back for every dollar we send to Washington from the State. Back in around 1998, as I was coming to Congress, it was only 90.5 cents on the dollar.

In the next big Federal highway bill, we were able to increase that significantly to 93.7 cents on the dollar, but that still made us a quote, unquote, donor State. In other words, we were sending more money to the Feds than we were getting back for important projects.

Now, in the current bill, we are slated to get a little over a dollar, 102 cents on the dollar. So we will actually be getting back, through the Federal Highway Program, more than we are sending from Louisiana in the Federal gas tax.

A few other accomplishments. We passed some language to streamline bridge projects, particularly smaller bridge projects so we can do those more efficiently. We have authored legislation to advance vehicle technologies like ignition interlock locks that can be very helpful, dramatically cutting down on drunk driving.

We are targeting funds in the next highway bill to build additional lanes and improve the flow of commerce in areas of greatest congestion nationally. As you can imagine, Baton Rouge will absolutely qualify, Greater New Orleans will also qualify.

And over several years, we have secured significant funding for important projects. Those are five bullets that illustrate significant funding for specific targeted projects like Baton Rouge congestion relief. But obviously there's a lot more work to be done.

So Louisiana traffic, how bad is it? You all live in Greater Baton Rouge. I don't need to tell you. But just a few statistics. We rank 40th in the Nation in terms of our overall highway system. And we are 19th for urban interstate congestion here in Greater—that's actually statewide in urban areas, with about 31.67 percent of the miles on urban interstates counted as congested in Louisiana.

And our roads, how bad are they? We are actually ranked worse in terms of road condition, 48th in the Nation, with 15.31 percent of interstate mileage considered in outright poor condition.

That obviously has a big negative impact on safety. We are ranked very poorly in terms of deadly crashes, ranking 44th, with a fatality rate of 1.54 deaths per 100 miles traveled by vehicle. So we need to improve that.

And then a big negative impact on commerce, which again, we all get through the Greater Baton Rouge experience. These are national figures.

The American Society of Civil Engineers estimates that the loss of sales nationally because of congestion could total a trillion dollars in this time period 2012 to 2020. And the reduced productivity

and higher expenses could drain \$3.1 trillion from our Gross Domestic Product. So it certainly is a negative impact on the economy.

And this final slide is our current Federal Highway Program funding challenge. So the part to the left in the darker shade is past to the present. And those bars are basically the revenue from the Federal gas tax. And as you can see, in the past, they have basically covered the program. But as costs go up with normal inflation, if you look to the right, that's the future.

And the Federal gas tax, the way it is slated to continue, which are the more lightly shaded bars, will not cover the cost of the program even at current levels, adding inflation. So that gap, that delta between the lightly shaded bars and the line is the challenge we have in terms of funding the Federal Highway Program moving forward. And that's a lot of what we are here to talk about today.

We are very, very honored to have four excellent witnesses with us this morning from Louisiana who have great insight and significant roles in all of these issues. So let me introduce all four of them and then they will testify for about 5 minutes each in turn, and then we will have a discussion with them.

First, we are going to hear from Secretary Sherri LeBas, who heads the Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development. Secretary LeBas is a Professional Civil Engineer with more than 29 years in State service in Louisiana working in DOTD, as well as the Division of Administration. She is responsible for more than a \$1.7 billion annual budget and over 4200 employees across the State.

Next, we will hear from Joey Coco. Joey is currently a managing principal with the firm Forte and Tablada of Baton Rouge. He has served as the President of the American Society of Civil Engineers, Baton Rouge Branch, and as a Director of the Louisiana Section of the ASCE. He is also a Deputy Director of the first Louisiana infrastructure report card which was released in 2012.

Next, we will hear from Ken Perret. Ken is currently President of the Louisiana Good Roads and Transportation Association. Prior to his current role, he served as an Assistant Secretary for the Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development and an Administrator for the Federal Highway Administration.

And last, but certainly not least, will be Roy Quezaire. Roy served as State Representative from District 58 from 1992 to 2007 and he chaired the State House Transportation Committee during his tenure there. He resigned his seat to become the legislative liaison for DOTD and he is currently Deputy Director at the Port of South Louisiana, which is our Nation's No. 1 port in terms of commercial tonnage movement.

Again, thanks to all of you for being here, for your work, and we will start with Secretary LeBas.

**STATEMENT OF SHERRI LeBAS, SECRETARY, LOUISIANA
DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION AND DEVELOPMENT**

Ms. LeBAS. Good morning. I would like to take this opportunity and just say thank you for inviting me here to speak before the subcommittee on behalf of DOTD.

A strong and viable transportation system is needed in order to support the growth of Louisiana's economy. This growth can only

happen by working together with local partners and prioritizing funding for transportation projects that improve major corridors, reduce traffic congestion, and improve road quality.

An example of this growth is the Horace Wilkinson Bridge, also known as the new bridge in Baton Rouge. Largely due to economic growth, the average daily traffic on this bridge has increased from 88,500 in 2010 to 102,502 in 2013. This is a 15 percent increase in just 3 years.

Unfortunately, the cost of providing sustainable and reliable infrastructure and services keeps increasing as our revenue streams are stagnant. In this period of growing demands on infrastructure, I believe that we must continue to work together to strive for creative and innovative solutions to fund, design, and construct projects. It is for this reason we need long-term stability in transportation to meet our Nation's many transportation infrastructure needs.

DOTD manages \$1.7 billion in capital and operating revenue and expenditures each year. We are also responsible for maintaining the safety and efficiency of Louisiana's highway system, which includes 16,655 miles of State roadway, including 931 miles of interstate, 12,821 bridges. Of these, 7,887 are State owned.

Additionally, DOTD supports the development of Louisiana's aviation, marine, rail, and transit infrastructure to facilitate economic growth. These include 34 ports, 62 airports, 11 urban transit providers, and 32 rural transit providers, three ferry service locations, and much more.

Since 2008, DOTD has invested more than \$7 billion, which includes \$3.93 billion in Federal funds in Louisiana's infrastructure and routinely uses all the money it receives from the Federal Highway Trust Fund. This translates into more than 3,000 improvement projects, including approximately 8,500 miles of roadway, and 472 bridges.

As a result of our mutual investment, Louisiana's backlog of roads and bridge needs has been reduced from \$14 billion to \$12.35 billion. Still a large number. As most of you know, bridges play a significant role in the makeup of Louisiana's infrastructure. We rank first in the Nation for the most movable bridges, third for the most timber bridges, and third for bridges with square feet of deck area.

Every day, a high volume of motorists cross the more than 12,000 bridges statewide. That's one of the many reasons to invest in our bridges. These aging structures not only have statewide but nationwide impact as they serve as a vital link of vast economic importance.

One example of an important bridge project which awaits funding is the I-10 Calcasieu River bridge. Currently in the environmental phase, this \$450 million project involves six-laning the corridor, replacing the bridge and the approach roadways, in addition to revamping nearby interchanges and frontage roads. But current funding hinders making this bridge project a reality.

While we continue to invest in our bridges across the State, we are just as equally committed to investing in our roadways. Road projects include stretches of roads that need to be overlaid, and

bridges that are posted causing farm products to have to travel further to get to the market or point of distribution.

In some cases, it is a local bridge that may have to close because there aren't enough dollars to make the necessary repairs. Sadly, these figures will continue to escalate as the national highway system ages. Additionally, we are seeing increased vehicular and truck usage across the country and especially on the Nation's interstates.

On our displays, we have one that outlines the State's mega-projects. Louisiana DOTD's current update to the statewide Transportation Plan identifies 113 major transportation improvements or mega-projects statewide.

A mega-project is a very expensive or large-scale transportation improvement that has regional or statewide impact which requires funding outside the normal DOTD funding mechanisms.

Also, there are a series of maps that shows normal afternoon congestion in the metropolitan areas on a typical afternoon during peak hours. In Baton Rouge, we can see traffic begin to build at the new bridge at 3:30 p.m. and can last until after 6:30 p.m.

Thank you for extending this invitation to address this subcommittee and for helping raise awareness to the infrastructure deficit by giving it the attention it deserves.

Louisiana DOTD is not slowing down in its efforts to provide solutions to the State's infrastructure challenges. However, we are depending on the Federal Government to do its share of lifting when it comes to funding these solutions. States cannot maintain this Nation's infrastructure alone. We must work together to foster economic growth and prosperity by building and maintaining a strong infrastructure network. Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Ms. LeBas follows:]

**Sherri LeBas, Secretary
Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development**

**Hearing on behalf of the Senate EPW Committee by the
Subcommittee on Transportation and Infrastructure**

Overview of Louisiana System Budget and Spending

Interstate commerce is a driving force behind the need for a strong and sustainable infrastructure. The global, national, and local economies depend on the nation's infrastructure system to thrive. No state can effectively manage their transportation system without federal investment. Likewise, local communities depend on the state and federal partnership to assist them in meeting local needs to serve citizens.

Since 2008, DOTD has invested more than \$7 billion which includes \$3.93 billion in federal funds in Louisiana's infrastructure and routinely uses all the money it receives from the Federal Highway Trust Fund. In addition to federally appropriated funding, the United States Department of Transportation compensates the states that are successful in obligating their full federal highway funding allotment during the fiscal year by providing additional funding. For 13 consecutive years, DOTD has received additional federal redistributed funding for effectively delivering projects and using federal funds. Last fiscal year, Louisiana received \$41 million in redistributed funds.

This federal funding, be it formula, discretionary, or in the form of redistributed funds, is greatly needed as the state maintains its 16,655 miles of the Louisiana transportation system which is part of the total 61,300 miles of public roads in the state. The 931 miles of which are part of the interstate system is too important to rely solely on state and local funding, and far too expensive. There are also 12,821 bridges in Louisiana, and 7,887 of those are state- owned.

Louisiana is ranked third for largest amount of bridge deck space due to the length and width of many of these bridges. With a service life of 50 to 75 years, many of Louisiana's bridges are rapidly reaching their limit of serviceability, it is crucial for DOTD to get robust federal participation to help reconstruct or extend the service life or replace these bridges.

DOTD has a modest capital and operating budget to maintain the needs of the state's highway and interstate system, including 62 airports (seven commercial) and 34 ports (seven deep draft), all of which are vital to the state's and nation's economy.

The State Transportation Trust Fund includes a \$0.16 cent per gallon gasoline tax, license fees, weight permits and \$0.04 percent aviation sales tax. TIMED TTF includes \$0.04 cents gasoline tax which is committed to debt service on the TIMED project. Federal funds from gas tax, transit funds and some opportunity grants equal approximately \$650 million per year. With much more funding, there is so much more we could be doing for this state's infrastructure.

We need stability in transportation funding over a longer period of six years or more and at least maintaining current funding levels, but preferably increasing to meet our nation's many transportation infrastructure needs. To maintain our infrastructure, we cannot afford to allow MAP 21 to expire without a long-term replacement. The short-term extension of the current federal surface transportation bill at the current level of funding is important, but please do not interpret it as an acceptable solution.

Louisiana Highway and Bridge Needs

Louisiana has a backlog of \$12.3 billion in transportation needs. The backlog doesn't pertain to specific projects nor does it reflect the mega projects that will be discussed later; rather it is a summation of needs for the existing state highway system. The needs assessment information is often used to help identify projects that can be added to Highway Priority Program as funding allows. Moreover, there is, and always will be, a continuous need for maintenance associated with the upkeep of our infrastructure.

The total highway and bridge backlog of \$12.3 billion includes \$9.4 billion for highway needs and \$2.9 billion for bridge needs. In laymen's terms, there are projects in communities across this state that need immediate attention. The project include stretches of roads need to be overlayed, and bridges that is now posted and farm products have to travel further to get to the market or point of distribution. In some cases, it is a local bridge that may have to close because there aren't enough dollars to make the necessary repairs. Congestion and capacity needs, which require major widening or adding lanes, comprise 47 percent (or \$5.9 billion) of the total needs. Also 46.6 percent of highway needs, or \$4.4 billion, occur on the National Highway System and will increase with the expanded NHS. This means trucks, and passenger vehicles are sitting in traffic longer than necessary. The new turn lane cannot be added or the additional travel lanes that are needed are only in the planning stage with no identified funding for construction.

Statewide Bottlenecks and Roadway Conditions

Louisiana ranks 11th for largest system under state control and 30th in total miles of public roadway. Overall the highway system has expanded by less than one percent in the last decade, but demand on the system has grown by 11 percent. Plus, urbanization has led to a 21 percent increase in urban mileage from 2000 to 2010 and a 41 percent increase in urban vehicle miles traveled during that same time.

Louisiana DOTD's goal is to maintain and improve the existing system so that it stays in current or better condition. However, with the increases in demand and with Louisiana's growing economy, this may prove a lofty goal without stability in federal funding. An example of congestion catching up with infrastructure progress would be the increased traffic on the Horace Wilkinson Bridge, also known as the "new" Bridge, in Baton Rouge. Largely in part to economic growth, the state has seen the average daily traffic increase from 88,500 in 2010 to 102,500 in 2013. This is equivalent to a 15 percent increase in just three years. (See attached figure showing congestion in the Baton Rouge metropolitan area.)

Industry leaders have voiced concerns about employee retention due to commuting challenges presented by current traffic conditions, especially eastbound traffic movement to East Baton Rouge Parish. In addition, DOTD routinely receives complaints from travelers who have to wait upward of 45 minutes to an hour to get from their place of employment in West Baton Rouge or Iberville parishes to their homes in East Baton Rouge Parish.

Current data shows that in 2013, 90 percent of all roadway miles were at fair or above fair condition. The interstate system was in the best condition with 97.9 percent of mileage in acceptable condition. And lastly, 84.9 percent of the rural highway system (non-federal) was in

fair or better condition. To maintain this level of service, there must be adequate and stable funding.

Mega Projects

Louisiana DOTD's current update to the Statewide Transportation Plan identifies 113 major transportation improvements or mega projects statewide. A mega project is a large-scale transportation improvement that has regional or statewide impact which requires funding outside the normal DOTD funding mechanisms. These transformative projects seek to help communities thrive by providing their residents with a better quality of life and offer businesses better economic opportunities. As stated earlier, industry is expanding in Louisiana and to keep up with the growth, and to prepare for the future, these projects are necessary to foster economic growth in the state and nation. The 113 mega projects costing in excess of \$40 billion are prioritized as A through D. Only 39 projects are prioritized as A and B mega projects. These have a total cost of \$10.5 billion (\$6.6 billion in responsibility of DOTD). (See attached map showing location of Priority A and B megaprojects.)

Guiding Principles for Federal Reauthorization

The Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development has been efficient with the funding it has received. However, for the state to keep up with economic growth and create more opportunities for the nation, there has to be long-term adequate funding to address the aging infrastructure, as well as build a more efficient transportation system to spur economic

development. The citizens of Louisiana and the United States deserve a safe, efficient, and viable infrastructure system.

The guiding principles for federal reauthorization should include maximum administrative program flexibility, the simplification and streamlining of federal approval, in addition to providing reduced oversight procedures for routine and recurring processes.

It should also utilize existing data sets for performance measures and limit national performance measures to a credible minimum, as well as implement measures through a process that allows innovation without fear of penalties. Further, there should be a continued strong federal role in investing in and maintaining the National Highway System, while reducing the federal role on the remainder of the system. Lastly, the federal government should respect the role and responsibilities of the states and local governments and maintain core principle of a federally assisted, state-administered highway program.

It will be more beneficial to the nation if the federal government distributes the maximum amount of highway funds to the states through core highway programs using a formula where needs can be addressed. Discretionary funds have tended to fund special interest, non-highway projects rather than projects and corridors of national interest. In conclusion, federal funding should be established that will keep pace with transportation needs and inflation.

And lastly, Louisiana has four of the top 10 United States water ports as ranked by total tons. These ports are vital to the nation's economy. Louisiana has a vast interconnected system of roads, rail, airports, ports and transit that touches every resident, visitor, business and industry in the state. Federal Investments are needed for not only highways and bridges but should also

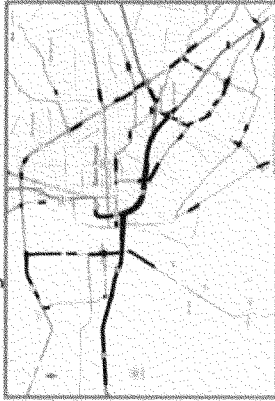
provide funding to maintain and improve freight and passenger rail, ports and waterways, aviation as well as public transportation.

In Closing, Louisiana DOTD is not slowing down in its efforts to provide solutions to the state's infrastructure challenges. We are, however, depending on the federal government to do its share of lifting when it comes to funding these solutions.

As in other states, the current legislature is debating transportation reforms that, if passed, will be a state driven solution. We can design and build cost effective and safe infrastructure, we know what needs to be done, and our soon to be approved long-term transportation plan is proof. But, know this one important fact, states cannot maintain this nation's infrastructure alone and at the rate we are going, this country may not be able to keep up with transportation needs associated with economic growth and prosperity. The unacceptable alternative is for the growth to be limited by inaction due to funding, thereby compromising the actual framework of the nation's economy, our infrastructure.

Statewide Afternoon Traffic Congestion

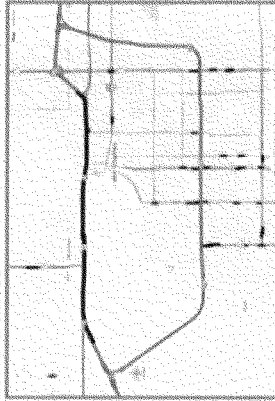
Baton Rouge



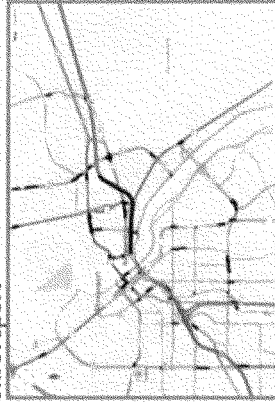
New Orleans

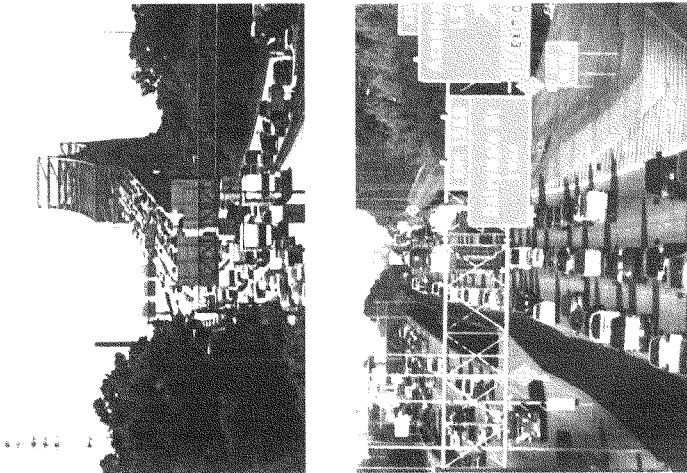
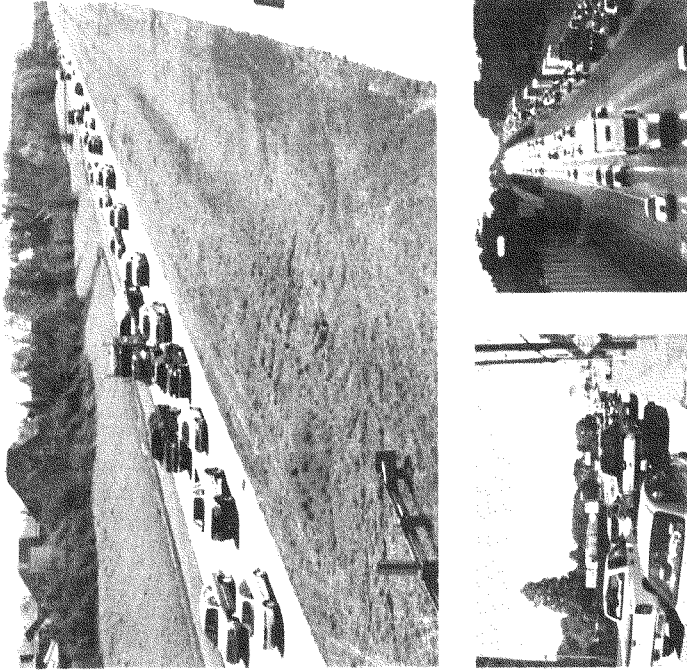


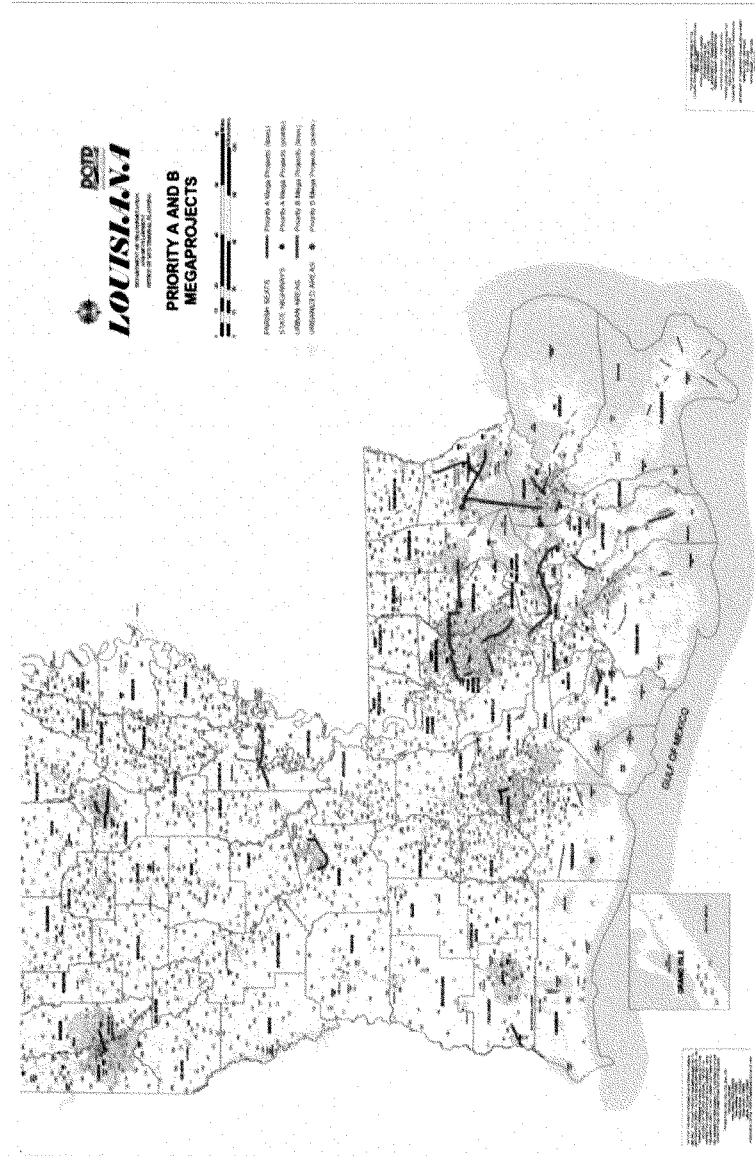
Lake Charles



Shreveport







6.4 Prioritized Unfunded Megaprojects

The 2015 Plan update includes 39 megaprojects listed as Priority A and B. Priority A megaprojects are those projects that are of highest priority to the state that will be funded under Revenue Scenarios 3 or 4. Revenue Scenario 3 assumes a moderate increase of transportation funds due to an increase in the Transportation Trust Fund from a state vehicle sales tax revenue infusion expected in fiscal year 2020. Priority B megaprojects are those projects that will be funded under Revenue Scenario 4. Revenue Scenario 4 assumes an aggressive increase in transportation funding due to the dedicated vehicle sales tax beginning in 2020 plus a \$300 million annual increase in federal funding beginning in fiscal year 2020.

6.4.1 Priority A Megaprojects

There are twenty Priority A megaprojects worth \$4.8 billion. Of this amount, the DOTD would fund \$3.7 billion of that total (assuming new revenues become available), and other entities (MPOs, local governments, private sector, etc.) would fund the remaining \$1.1 billion worth of project costs, from other funding sources. The twenty projects include 13 interstate upgrades/ widening projects, three bridge projects, two new highways, Mississippi River deepening and the expansion of a Port of New Orleans container terminal. Table 6-1 lists the Priority A megaprojects. Figure 6-3 illustrates the Priority A megaprojects in addition to the TIMED Program projects plus the completely funded megaprojects.

Table 6-1: Priority A Megaprojects

ID No.	Area	Facility	Limits	Improvement Type	Total Cost (\$M)	DOTD (\$M)	Other Funding Sources (\$M)
1	Lafayette	I-49 South	I-10 in Lafayette to Lafayette Airport	Upgrade to freeway	\$750	\$700	\$50
4	Lafourche & St. Charles Parishes	I-49 South	Raceland to Des Allemands	Upgrade to freeway	\$190	\$190	\$0
23b	Shreveport	I-20	Red River Bridge (I-49, Shreveport to Traffic Street, Bossier City)	Widen to 6 lanes	\$135	\$135	\$0
23c	Shreveport	I-20	LA 3 to I-220 E	Widen to 6 lanes	\$90	\$90	\$0
24	Monroe	I-20	LA 546 to LA 594 (Monroe)	Widen to 6 lanes	\$220	\$220	\$0
25	Sulphur/Lake Charles	I-10	TX SL to LA 108	Widen to 6 lanes	\$65	\$65	\$0
26	Lake Charles	I-10 (Calcasieu River BR./ Approaches)	I-210W to US 90 (Lake Charles)	Replace bridge, widen highway	\$450	\$450	\$0
27	Lake Charles	I-10	UPRR Overpass (Lake Charles) to I-210	Widen 4 to 6 lanes	\$50	\$50	\$0
28	Lafayette	I-10	LA 93 to I-49	Widen 4 to 6 lanes	\$100	\$100	\$0
29	Baton Rouge	I-10	I-110 to I-12 (Baton Rouge)	Widen 6 to 8 lanes	\$320	\$320	\$0

ID No.	Area	Facility	Limits	Improvement Type	Total Cost (\$M)	DOTD (\$M)	Other Funding Sources (\$M)
30a	Ascension	I-10	LA 42 to LA 74	Widen 4 to 6 lanes & new interchange	\$100	\$100	\$0
31	New Orleans	I-10	Williams Blvd. (LA 49) to Veterans Blvd	Widen to 8 lanes	\$150	\$150	\$0
34	Slidell	I-12	LA 21 to Airport Rd (to I-10/I-59)	Widen 4 to 6 lanes	\$170	\$170	\$0
44	New Orleans	LA 23	Belle Chasse Tunnel (New Orleans)	Build 4-lane bridge	\$180	\$160	\$20
64	St. Tammany	LA 3241 (TIMED)	I-12 to Bush	New 4 lane	\$230	\$230	\$0
65	St. Bernard	Florida Avenue (TIMED)	Bridge and Approaches	New Bridge and Approaches	\$270	\$270	\$0
73b	Alexandria/Pineville	Alexandria/Pineville Beltway	Beltway (Segments "E, F,G,H,I"/Red Route) from LA 28 East to LA 28 West	Build/Upgrade 4-lane highway (Relocate LA 28 south of urban area)	\$175	\$155	\$20
78a	MS River	MS River	MS River	Deepen River to Baton Rouge	\$300	\$0	\$300
78b	Louisiana Coastal Access Channels	Coastal Access Channels	Coastal Access Channels	Deepen coastal access channels	\$300	\$0	\$300
79	New Orleans	Port of NO	Port of New Orleans	Napoleon Avenue Container Terminal Phase II & III	\$550	\$100	\$450
Total Costs					\$4,795	\$3,655	\$1,140

Note: Project ID Numbers are not assigned or listed in any order of priority.

6.4.2 Priority B Megaprojects

There are nineteen Priority B megaprojects totaling approximately \$5.8 billion. Of this amount, the DOTD would fund \$3.0 billion of that total (assuming new revenues become available), and other entities (MPOs, local governments, private sector, etc.) would fund the remaining \$2.7 billion, from other funding sources. The 19 projects include one highway and five interstate upgrades/ widening projects, four new highways, two rail projects, two interchange improvements, three new bridges and Pontchartrain Causeway Bridge safety improvements. Table 6-2 lists the Priority B megaprojects. Figure 6-4 illustrates the Priority A and B megaprojects in addition to the TIMED Program projects plus the completely funded megaprojects.

Table 6-2: Priority B Megaprojects

ID No.	Area	Facility	Limits	Improvement Type	Total Cost (\$M)	DOTD (\$M)	Other Funding Sources (\$M)
3	St. Mary	I-49 South	Wax Lake outlet to Berwick	Upgrade to freeway	\$250	\$225	\$25
5d	Jefferson Parish	I-49 South	Extend West Bank Expressway (Ames Blvd. to Westwego)	Upgrade to freeway	\$150	\$150	\$0
8b	S. Central LA	LA 1 South	Golden Meadow to Leeville (Phase 2)	Complete 2 lane elevated roadway	\$320	\$250	\$70
9a	Houma	Houma-Thibodaux NS Connection to LA 3127 -- Interstate Access Highway Phase I	US 90 to LA 3127; LA 3127	Purchase ROW for 4 lanes; Build out 2 lanes of new alignment; Widen LA 3127 (LA 3213 to LA 70)	\$550	\$350	\$200
14	Monroe	New Bridge	Ouachita River in Monroe	New bridge & connections	\$350	\$150	\$200
30b	Ascension	I-10	LA 74 to LA 22	Widen 4 to 6 lanes	\$80	\$80	\$0
32	New Orleans	I-10	Elysian Fields Ave. to Bullard Ave. (New Orleans)	Widen, implement ITS	\$225	\$225	\$0
33	Hammond	I-12	Satsuma to I-55 (S. Satsuma Rd. - I-55)	Widen to 6 lanes	\$180	\$180	\$0
40	E. Central Louisiana	US 84	Archie to Ferriday (El Camino)	Widen 2 to 4 lanes	\$85	\$75	\$10
50	Shreveport/Bossier City	LA 511 (J. Davis Bridge)	70th St. to Barksdale Blvd. (Shreveport)	Construct new 2-lane bridge	\$60	\$50	\$10
51b	New Orleans	Pontchartrain Causeway	US 190 to I-10	Raise SB Railing, Safety Bays, 10-foot shoulders	100% Toll Funded	\$0	\$0
54	W. Baton Rouge Parish	LA 1 Connector	I-10 to LA 1	Build 4-lane	\$125 (\$60 from tolls)	\$65	\$60

ID No.	Area	Facility	Limits	Improvement Type	Total Cost (\$M)	DOTD (\$M)	Other Funding Sources (\$M)
57	Baton Rouge	Baton Rouge North Bypass	I-10 to I-12 (Baton Rouge)	Build/upgrade to 4-lane freeway, upgrade existing or build new MS River Bridge	\$1,000	\$500	\$500
60	Shreveport	I-49 North (Inner City Connector)	I-20 at I-49S to I-220 at I-49N Shreveport	New 4-lane freeway	\$380	\$300	\$80
84	S. Central LA	Rail	Baton Rouge to New Orleans Intercity Passenger Rail	Passenger/Freight Rail	\$262	\$0	\$262
85	New Orleans	Rail	New Orleans Rail Gateway Project	Rail Gateway	\$700	\$100	\$600
99	New Orleans	Loyola Drive/I-10 interchange, Kenner	Reconstruct Loyola Interchange (Improve access to new Louis Armstrong N.O. International Airport Terminal)	Reconstruct Interchange	\$90	\$80	\$10
100	St. Tammany Parish	I-12 Interchange Upgrade Projects	I-12 @ LA 21, US 190, LA 434, and Northshore Blvd.	Reconstruct Interchanges	\$160	\$160	\$0
101	Baton Rouge Metro Area	New MRB	LA 1 to LA 30	New MS River Bridge	\$800	\$100	\$700
Total Costs					\$5,767	\$3,040	\$2,727

Note: Project ID Numbers are not assigned or listed in any order of priority.

Senator VITTER. OK. Thank you very much, Madam Secretary. And we will go in the order of my introductions, so Joey Coco will be next.

STATEMENT OF JOEY COCO, AMERICAN SOCIETY OF CIVIL ENGINEERS

Mr. COCO. Thank you, Senator. I appreciate you inviting me to be here. I'm here to represent the American Society of Civil Engineers or ASCE. ASCE is the largest engineering organization in the country. It was founded in 1852 and has members represented in 174 countries across the world.

I'm the Past President of the Baton Rouge Branch. I'm also Louisiana Section member, Board Member and, as David mentioned, I was the 2012 infrastructure report card Deputy Director.

ASCE stands on the forefront of a profession that plans, designs, constructs and operates society's economic and social engine, the built environment, while protecting and restoring the natural environment.

Most importantly, I am a practicing engineer. I am a licensed Professional Engineer and I have spent much of my career working on transportation projects, working on our bridges, under our deteriorating bridges as well. I have worked firsthand on transportation matters in Louisiana and I'm aware of the issues that are going on across the country related to our road and transportation and bridge infrastructure.

As our Nation continues to defer maintenance on our roads and bridges and transit system and fails to modernize other critical infrastructure sectors, we lose global competitiveness, our economy suffers, and we sacrifice our ability to create jobs.

ASCE's national 2013 report card graded the Nation's infrastructure a D+ based on 16 different categories and found that the Nation needs to invest approximately \$3.6 trillion by 2020 to maintain the national infrastructure in a good condition.

In particular, on a national level, bridges received the grade of C+ and roads received a grade of D. So the problems that we are talking about here today are not just Louisiana based, they happen in the rest of the country as well.

In 2012, our Louisiana infrastructure report card found that our State's bridge grade was a D+ and our roads were graded a D. This effort was conducted by 50 volunteers from public, private, and academic backgrounds and was unfunded.

We found that Louisiana's road system is congested, is in poor condition, and is inadequate to meet the needs of a State competing to provide economic opportunities for businesses and citizens in the 21st century. Louisiana has the fourth highest square footage of bridge deck in the country with Federal and State transportation officials classifying almost 29 percent of Louisiana's bridges as either structurally deficient or functionally obsolete.

The number of deficient bridges in Louisiana is more than the total number of bridges in 10 other States, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico, and the situation isn't getting any better. Louisiana needs substantial increases in revenue to fund improvement for its deteriorating bridge infrastructure.

Our deteriorated and congested transportation network costs Louisiana motorists \$3.1 billion annually. Boiling that down just a bit, \$1,050 per driver in Baton Rouge, \$1,254 per driver in New Orleans. There's a real cost to inaction on Louisiana families when it comes to the quality of our roads and bridge infrastructure.

This is everyone's problem. I own this infrastructure. Everyone in this audience today owns this infrastructure. Our ASCE members own this infrastructure. The public owns this problem.

Providing redundancy to alleviate congestion on our major economic corridors in Louisiana is costly, primarily because of the major river body crossings that we have, also due to our poor soil conditions. The things that make our State great also make our infrastructure very expensive.

An example is the update to the bridge here in Baton Rouge, the old bridge. That project alone, to preserve it, to repair it, to paint it, is \$100 million. That's a lot of money.

Most importantly for Louisiana, we are America's energy corridor and the cost to the Nation and to Louisiana of not having a first-class transportation system here is real. Of recent, there have been numerous mega-project announcements for industry in the State but a few have fizzled citing transportation as a reason for not investing in Louisiana.

Plants just outside of Baton Rouge are struggling to figure out how to consistently get people to work, when instead they should be focusing on bettering their goods and services.

Put simply, infrastructure is an investment and without it our quality of life will suffer when basic services cannot be provided consistently.

So how can Congress help? As you know, we approach a deadline to reauthorize the surface transportation law, MAP-21, by the end of July and we feel that extending this deadline further into the year will only create more program uncertainty and hinder the ability of our members to plan and deliver the types of quality projects that we are capable of doing.

ASCE favors funding solutions that provide for a long-term revenue stream, is sustainable, can grow the program, does not contribute to the deficit and ideally maintains the user fee funding principle.

ASCE supports public/private partnerships, particularly when they are used to deliver projects that could otherwise be built with existing public funds. However, these deals oftentimes rely on public funding to repay investors, and having political support for user fees and for the occasional user fee increases. So it's essential to grow the private market as well.

ASCE believes that Congress should set its sight on delivering a 6-year bill with an increase in the funding via a user-fee revenue source before the July 31st deadline. This is a tall order, we know, but one that has been on the agenda for quite some time and is absolutely necessary for Louisiana.

Finally, I would like to say thank you on behalf ASCE for your leadership in Congress specifically related to the Water Resources Development Act. We believe that that's going to help our 16 national categories and those specifically related to dams, inland wa-

terways, levees, ports, and wastewater. Those are very important areas for Louisiana.

ASCE looks forward to continuing to work with you. We greatly appreciate your willingness to talk about our infrastructure. And as I have said to my friends and family, and colleagues, that our bridges and our roads, they can't talk about their illnesses, someone has to talk about them and we really appreciate, as ASCE, you doing that. Thank you.

Senator VITTER. Great. Thank you very much, Joey.

And next we will hear from Ken Perret. Ken, welcome.

STATEMENT OF KEN PERRET, PRESIDENT, LOUISIANA GOOD ROADS AND TRANSPORTATION ASSOCIATION

Mr. PERRET. Thank you, Senator Vitter. I'm here today as my role as the President of the Louisiana Good Roads and Transportation Association. We are a nonprofit group that supports adequately financed and well-planned transportation systems that promote economic development, increase safety, and add to the quality of life of our citizens. We have 500 members here in Louisiana.

I come here today with no political agenda, just a facts-based message. In Louisiana, we have a broken and bottlenecked transportation system that literally is getting worse every day. Here in Baton Rouge, the I-10 river bridge congestion causes traffic backups every day and when crashes occur, hours of delay and driver frustration result.

Maintenance of our roads and bridges is being deferred. Congestion is building in urban areas. We now have a backlog of more than \$12 billion in needs on the existing highway system.

Since the American Society of Civil Engineers published a report card for Louisiana's infrastructure, a professional nonpartisan study of our public infrastructure, our bridges received a D+, and our roads a D. That was 3 years ago and nothing much has changed and certainly a grade of D is not an acceptable grade for our infrastructure.

We are not investing enough money in our transportation infrastructure. We finance transportation in Louisiana through a flat gasoline tax that has not been adjusted in a quarter of a century, yet we pretend to magically address Louisiana's 2015 transportation needs with a funding model that has not taken into account inflation since 1989. That's like trying to pay today's bills on a 1989 salary. In fact, that's exactly what we are doing. We have starved our transportation system of the funding it needs to keep up with today's demands.

So why aren't we putting more money into our transportation infrastructure? The political climate in recent years has been hostile to suggestions of increased taxes. No one wants to pay more taxes. In fact, no matter what plan you come up with, no matter how much trust you restore to the trust fund, it is going to take more taxes, more finances to fix our roads and bridges.

The nonpartisan Public Affairs Research Council said the Louisiana transportation system needs an extra \$650 million a year just to begin addressing the backlog of project needs. The report was 6 years ago and not much has changed.

Right now, Louisiana has one of the lowest gas taxes in the country at 20 cents a gallon. That translates to about \$100 per year for the average driver. Just \$100 a year. Now if you go out to a dinner and a movie, that would probably cost you \$100 in one night, and so drivers are paying \$100 a year for the upkeep of our State roads.

The national average is 30 cents per gallon in State taxes or about \$150 a year. So Louisiana drivers save about \$50 a year by holding the line on more taxes. The great irony is that in exchange for the \$50 a year in lower taxes, the average Louisiana driver pays more than \$1,000 a year extra in higher insurance rates and extra car repairs. It does not even value the time wasted while we are sitting in congestion thinking about the \$50 we saved in taxes.

Investing in our transportation system creates unique economic opportunities. According to the Federal Highway Administration, each \$1 billion invested in transportation leads to about 31,000 direct, indirect, and induced jobs. The big payoff is the increased economic activity the investment encourages.

The National Association of Manufacturers says that targeted long-term increases in U.S. public infrastructure investment over the next 15 years reap tremendous benefits. Major investments will create nearly almost 1.3 million jobs, grow the GDP about 2.9 percent, provide a return of about \$3 for every dollar invested and would significantly increase the American household take-home pay.

As I said in the beginning, Good Roads does not have a political agenda, but as a Professional Engineer and as a citizen, I have a duty to give you the facts. Our roads and bridges are the building blocks of our society. We must make fundamental changes to how we finance our system. We must invest in our own ability and in our economic future. We must swallow hard the reality that spending more than \$1,000 a year for a poor system that simply isn't worth saving \$50 in taxes.

And I have two additional points I would say that what is really important in moving forward is to build partnerships and getting people involved that are transportation shareholders or stockholders, you might say. That includes local governments, includes also the trucking industry. They are a big player. They need to be brought onboard and get their support. And from the local, State level, it takes leadership of the Governor to have an effective State transportation system.

So certainly we have some leadership in the legislature that are trying their best to get some increased funding, but we need leadership on the fourth floor in the Governor's Office to provide some leadership in moving our transportation system forward.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this testimony today.
[The prepared statement of Mr. Perret follows:]

Thank you, members of the committee. My name is Kenneth Perret, and I am a professional engineer, former assistant secretary with the Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development and retired administrator for the Federal Highway Administration. I am here today in my role as president of the Louisiana Good Roads and Transportation Association, a non-profit group that supports an adequately financed and well-planned transportation system that promotes economic development, increases safety and adds to the quality of life for our citizens.

I come here today with no political agenda, just a fact-based message. In Louisiana, we have a broken and bottlenecked transportation system that literally is getting worse every day. Here in Baton Rouge, the I-10 Mississippi River bridge congestion causes traffic backups every day, and when crashes occur, hours of delay and driver frustration are the results. Maintenance on our roads and bridges is being deferred, congestion is building in the urban areas, and we now have a backlog of more than 12 billion dollars in needed work on the existing state highway system. Additional billions will also be needed for new capacity projects. Three years ago, the Louisiana Section of the American Society of Civil Engineers published The Report Card for Louisiana's Infrastructure, a professional, non-political study of our public infrastructure. Our bridges received a D+; our roads received a D. That was three years ago, and not much has changed.

We are not investing enough money in our transportation infrastructure. We finance transportation in Louisiana through a flat gasoline tax that has not been adjusted in a quarter of a Century. Yet we pretend to magically address Louisiana's 2015 transportation needs with a funding model that has not taken inflation into account since 1989. That's like trying to pay today's bills on a 1989 salary. In fact, that's exactly what we're doing. We have starved our transportation system of the funding it needs to keep up with today's demands.

So, why aren't we putting more money into our transportation infrastructure? The political climate in recent years has been hostile to suggestions of increased taxes. No one wants to pay more taxes. The fact is, no matter what plan you come up with, no matter how much trust you restore to the trust fund, it's going to take more taxes to fix our roads and bridges. The non-partisan Public Affairs Research Council said Louisiana's transportation system needed an extra 650 million dollars a year just to begin addressing the backlog of needed projects. That report was six years ago, and not much has changed.

Right now, Louisiana has one of the lowest gas taxes in the country at 20 cents per gallon. That translates to about 100 dollars per year for the average driver. The national average is 30 cents per gallon in state taxes, or about 150 dollars a year, so Louisiana drivers save about 50 dollars a year by holding the line on more taxes.

The great irony is that, in exchange for saving 50 dollars a year in lower taxes, the average Louisiana driver pays more than one thousand dollars extra a year in higher insurance rates and extra car repairs. That doesn't even address the value of time and fuel wasted while we're sitting in congestion, thinking about the 50 dollars a year we are saving.

Investing in our transportation system creates unique economic development opportunities. According to the Federal Highway Administration, each \$1 billion invested in transportation leads to about 31 thousand direct, indirect and induced jobs. But the big payoff is the increased economic activity the investment encourages. The National Association of Manufacturers says targeted, long-term increases in U.S. public infrastructure investments over the next 15 years will reap tremendous benefits. Major investment will create nearly almost 1.3 million jobs, it will

grow real GDP by 2.9 percent, it will provide a return of 3 dollars for every dollar invested and would significantly increase American household take-home pay.

As I said in the beginning, Good Roads does not have a political agenda, but as a professional engineer and as a citizen, I have a duty to give you the facts. Our roads and bridges are the building blocks of our society. We must make fundamental changes to how we finance our system. We must invest in our own mobility and economic future. We must swallow the hard reality that spending more than 1,000 dollars a year to pay for a poor system simply isn't worth saving 50 dollars a year in taxes.

Thank you very much for the opportunity to provide this testimony today.

Kenneth A. Perret, President
Louisiana Good Roads and Transportation Association
P.O. Box 3713
Baton Rouge, Louisiana 70821

Senator VITTER. Great. Thank you very much, Ken. Appreciate it. Last, but certainly not least, Roy Quezaire.

STATEMENT OF ROY QUEZAIRE, DEPUTY DIRECTOR, PORT OF SOUTH LOUISIANA

Mr. QUEZAIRE. Good morning. And thank you, Senator Vitter, for this invitation. It is indeed an honor and pleasure to participate.

I have the opportunity here to hopefully educate and sensitize individuals on the impact and the importance that the ports of Louisiana, State of Louisiana, brings to the table for all of us individually and collectively. Also, to also segue back in on the traffic congestion, suggestions and relief opportunities that we should take advantage of.

Traffic congestion as it impacts the ports of Louisiana. First and foremost, what is the significance of Louisiana ports? One in every five Louisiana jobs is supported by Louisiana ports. 400,000 jobs are created and supported also by Louisiana ports. \$20 billion in personal earnings supported also by the ports, with 500 million tons of cargo moved on the lower Mississippi River annually.

As you can see, on the chart to your left, there are 40 ports in Louisiana, including developing ports and the Louisiana Offshore Oil Port or basically otherwise known as the LOOP. There are 16 inland river ports in Louisiana, six deep-draft seaports in Louisiana, and nine coastal energy ports.

Louisiana ports carry 25 percent of U.S. waterborne commerce, which is significant. 47 percent of all Louisiana parishes contain a port. Of the five largest ports in the U.S., four are located along the Mississippi River. Port Fourchon directly serves approximately 90 percent of all deep-water offshore rigs and platforms in the Gulf and nearly half of all shallow-water rigs and platforms in the region. And it also serves or gives 18 percent or offers 18 percent of the U.S. oil supply.

Net income, operating and non-operating revenues, grew by almost 34 million over a 10-year period for all ports, an average of 2.9 million for coastal ports. In 2010, ports directly invested approximately \$130 million, which yielded the creation and support of 2,250 jobs with personal earnings of \$85.5 million. Great impact.

The Port of South Louisiana, for which I proudly serve as Deputy Director, extends 54 miles along the Mississippi River, and is the largest tonnage port in the Western Hemisphere. Over 291 million short tons to major U.S. markets in the Midwest and Northeast is what the Port of South Louisiana delivered last year and we are looking forward to breaking that record this year. Over 400 ocean-going vessels and 55,000 barges were serviced. Cargo throughput accounts for 15 percent of U.S. and 57 percent of all Louisiana exports.

The Port of Greater Baton Rouge is ranked ninth nationally in total tonnage. Lake Charles has plans for \$275 million in capital improvements in the next 5 years. Deep-draft ship traffic is forecasted to double over the next 10 years, and that's included in the Calcasieu Ship Channel Traffic Study Report. Lake Charles forecasts 42 billion in natural gas related industrial development.

The Port of Morgan City supports companies essential to oil and gas industry and ships agricultural products. Port of New Iberia is

home to 100 companies providing component parts and services for the offshore oil industry.

Nearly half of all freight moved in Louisiana is by water with over 510 million tons in 2012. The five ports on the Mississippi River and Port of Lake Charles on the Calcasieu River are some of the largest tonnage ports in the United States. With the ports of south Louisiana, New Orleans, Baton Rouge, and Plaquemines, they are all rated in the top 10.

The WRDA bill, Senator, which I want to commend you on your individual efforts for the State of Louisiana, and all of its ports, that bill in 2014, allows for the operation and maintenance of the Mississippi River to be 100 percent federally responsible up to 50 feet. And that additional, that will bring a lot more commerce to the Mississippi River.

The United States Corps of Engineers and DOTD are presently cost-sharing in the study to deepen the Mississippi River to that targeted 50 feet. Many major chemical manufacturing plants are located between the Port of South Louisiana and that of Baton Rouge. The lower Mississippi River Deep-Draft Complex is the largest in the United States that offer waterborne access into 30 other States via inland waterways.

Plaquemines Port is home to the two largest coal terminals in the United States. More than 5,000 ocean-going vessels annually move through New Orleans on the lower Mississippi River. The Port of New Orleans is the Nation's top port of imported natural rubber. It is estimated that the Mississippi River and tributaries has over a \$200 billion annual impact on the United States.

Given these significant statistics on the importance of ports and therefore the need to improve traffic flow in and out of them, it becomes even more vital when we consider that freight volume is expected to double by 2040. We are already witnessing a new and previously unseen boom in domestic energy production and development that in and of itself is driving new conversations every day.

A report by the American Association of Civil Engineers reveals that at the Nation's 16 major container ports, deficient or congested surface transportation conditions resulted in a \$795 million impact on containerized imports and a \$311 million impact on ports.

In Louisiana, one of our biggest problems is that the Port of New Orleans with truck and rail traffic entering and exiting the port in downtown New Orleans. Currently, a spaghetti bowl of tracks and crossings often cause a train to take over 30 hours just to get through the area.

A goal of the New Orleans Gateway Program is to identify potential future projects throughout New Orleans that will streamline and improve the flow of freight and rail traffic through the city and to and from the ports.

To further address the existing challenges and the future demands of traffic flows for our ports, I recently had a discussion with and proposed an idea to Senator Vitter. The proposal for which he touched upon previously is to complete four-laning LA 1 on the west side of the Mississippi River I-10 just before the Baton Rouge bridge all the way down to the Sunshine Bridge, which has been and still is currently under-utilized.

LA 1 is currently four lanes from I-10 to White Castle. This would reduce the traffic on the heavily congested I-10 through the center of Baton Rouge.

Please keep in mind between the—there's only 10 miles from White Castle to Donaldsonville and it would only cost, with this idea, cost to bring in those additional two lanes, and you would have four lanes from the I-10 bridge all the way down to the Sunshine Bridge. We can then take advantage of the already four-lane segments of LA 1, which would be from Port Allen through Plaquemine through White Castle.

We should take advantage, again, of the under-utilized Sunshine Bridge, but most importantly, it would give speedier access and egress to and from the major ports and plants in southeast Louisiana along the Mississippi River corridor. Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Quezaire follows:]

**Mr. Roy Quezairé's Presentation to the
Hearing on behalf of the Senate EPW Committee by the
Subcommittee on Transportation and Infrastructure**

Subject: Traffic congestion as it impacts the ports of Louisiana.

First what is the significance of Louisiana's ports:

- 1 in 5 LA jobs supported by LA ports
- 400,000 jobs created and supported by LA ports
- \$20 billion in personal earnings supported by LA ports
- 500 million tons of cargo moved on the Lower Mississippi River annually
- As you can see on this chart there are 40 ports in Louisiana, including developing ports and the Louisiana Offshore Oil Port or LOOP
- 16 inland river ports in LA
- 6 deep-draft seaports in LA
- 9 coastal energy ports in LA
- LA ports carry 25% of US waterborne commerce
- 47% of all LA parishes contain a port
- Of the 5 largest ports in the US, 4 are located along the Mississippi River
- Port Fourchon directly services approximately 90% of all deep-water offshore rigs and platforms in the Gulf and nearly half of all shallow-water rigs and platforms in the region (18% of US oil supply)
- Net income (operating and non-operating revenues) grew by almost \$34 million over a 10 year period for all ports, an average of \$2.9 million for coastal ports.
- In 2010, ports directly invested approximately \$130 million which yielded the creation and support of 2,250 jobs with personal earnings of \$85.5 million.
- Port of South Louisiana extends 54 miles along the Mississippi River and is the largest tonnage port in the Western Hemisphere.
- Over 291 million short tons to major US markets in the Midwest and Northeast.
- Over 400 oceangoing vessels and 55,000 barges
- Cargo throughput accounts for 15% of US and 57% of LA exports
- Port of Greater Baton Rouge is ranked 9th nationally in total tonnage
- Lake Charles has plans for \$275 million in capital improvements in the next five years
- Deep-draft ship traffic is forecasted to double over the next ten years (Calcasieu Ship Channel traffic study)
- Lake Charles Port has \$42 billion in natural gas related industrial development
- Port of Morgan City supports companies essential to oil and gas industry and ships agricultural products
- Port of New Iberia is home to 100 companies providing component parts and services for the offshore oil industry
- Nearly half of all freight moved in Louisiana is by water, with over 510 million tons in 2012

- The five ports on the Mississippi River and Port of Lake Charles on the Calcasieu River are some of the largest tonnage ports in the United States. With the Ports of South Louisiana, New Orleans, Baton Rouge, and Plaquemines ranked in the top ten.
- The WRDA bill in 2014 allows for the operation and maintenance of the Mississippi river to be 100% federal responsibility up to 50 feet.
- US Army Corps of Engineers and DOTD are cost sharing in a study to deepen the Mississippi River to 50 Feet.
- Many major chemical manufacturing plants are located between the Ports of South Louisiana and Baton Rouge.
- The Lower Mississippi River Deep-Draft Complex is the largest in the United States that offer waterborne access into 30 other states via inland waterways.
- Plaquemines Port is home to the two largest coal terminals in the US.
- More than 5,000 oceangoing vessels annually move through New Orleans on the Lower Mississippi River.
- The Port of New Orleans is the nation's top port of imported natural rubber.
- It is estimated that the Mississippi River and Tributaries has over a \$200 billion annual impact on the economy of the United States.
- Given these significant statistics on the importance of the ports and therefore the need to improve traffic flow in and out of them, it becomes even more vital when we consider that freight volume is expected to double by 2040. We are already witnessing a new and previously unseen boom in domestic energy production and development that is in and of itself driving new conversations every day.
- ***A report by the American Association of Civil Engineer's*** reveals that at the nation's 16 major container ports, deficient or congested surface transportation conditions resulted in a \$795 million impact on containerized imports and a \$311 million impact on exports.
- In Louisiana, one of our biggest problems is at the Port of New Orleans, with truck ***and rail*** traffic entering and exiting the port in downtown New Orleans.
- Currently, a spaghetti bowl of tracks and crossings often cause a train to take over 30 hours just to get through the area. A goal of the New Orleans Gateway Program is to identify potential future projects throughout New Orleans that will streamline and improve the flow of freight rail traffic through the city and to and from the ports.

To further address the existing challenges and the future demands of traffic flow for our ports, I recently proposed an idea to Senator Vitter.

- The proposal is to complete four laneing LA 1 on the west side of the Mississippi from I-10, just before the Baton Rouge Bridge, all the way down to the Sunshine Bridge.
 - LA 1 is currently four-laned from I-10 to White Castle.
- This would reduce the traffic on the heavily congested I-10 through the center of Baton Rouge.
- Take advantage of the already four-laned segments of LA 1.

- Take advantage of the underutilized Sunshine Bridge.
- Most importantly it would give speedier access and egress to and from the major ports and plants in southeast Louisiana along the Mississippi River.

Senator VITTER. Great. Thank you very much, Roy. And now let's just have a discussion about all of these ideas.

First of all, let me say Joey mentioned again the biggest Federal issue before us in all of this, which is extending and reauthorizing the Federal Highway Program. And for the record, I certainly agree that this next step, we need a longer term approach. Quite frankly, there's a split in Congress. Some folks, particularly on the finance committee, who have to come up with the funding, are looking at simply another kick-the-can-down-the-road to the end of the year. I think that would be very negative and that they should really focus on a five, 6-year bill, which is what we are putting together on the transportation policy side in our transportation committee.

So that's a debate and a work in progress. So I would certainly encourage all of you in your national associations to weigh into that for a longer term bill. We will have to come up with something, one way or the other, by late July, early August, and hopefully it will be a longer term bill, which I support.

Madam Secretary, let me start with you. For obvious reasons, you and many others in the audience touched on the bridge here in Baton Rouge. Short-term, I'm not talking about the big picture, ideal solutions, but short-term, are there any improvements that could give some meaningful relief like closing either completely or at peak traffic times the Washington exit?

Ms. LEBAS. Well, first of all, we have synchronized the lights on LA 1 trying to get people on the west side to take LA 1 down to the old Mississippi River bridge and we are doing a rehabilitation of the old Mississippi River bridge, which hopefully that will lend people to be more apt to use that bridge. It's not just painting, it's also rehabilitation as well.

You know, interesting enough, closing the Washington Street exit is not going to create the relief that people may believe that it is going to create. In addition to that, there's quite a bit of opposition to closing that. But even with that opposition, if you look at the traffic modeling that we have done in that area, that will not solve the problem. So, what—

Senator VITTER. Will it reduce the problem?

Ms. LEBAS. No. It will not even reduce the problem because that's not what is really causing the problem. It is uncomfortable for people, I understand that, but it's not what is causing the backup and the delay.

What we are looking at? I want to talk about the study that we are doing. And I believe now—in the past, I don't believe we had the political will or really the public will to help fix that corridor from LA 415 to the I-10/I-12 split. I believe with the increase in traffic, I have seen just in my time as secretary for 5 years, that momentum and pendulum swing to where people are now demanding and saying this is important to Baton Rouge. This is important to our economy. We have got to fix this area.

We put out a survey, I-10 survey to the people, and I'm happy to report we have over 10,000 people who have now taken that survey. You know, I've talked about it in my public comments that we need the whole community to come together on this project, not just the people that live along that corridor, but all the people that

use it and the people on the west side of the river, as well as the east side.

So we are very encouraged about people taking the survey, over 10,000, telling us—if there's anyone listening, please continue to take that survey. We extended the date.

So what are we looking at and what is my vision? Here's what I would like to see happen. We are in the feasibility study right now. We will be showing some concepts to the public in August, this August. So I encourage people to come. And I have challenged the consultant that is doing this project to look at ways that we can do fundable pieces. Sometimes it's so hard for us to look at something and say, oh, my gosh—and I don't know what the cost estimate for all of this is, but let's say \$400 million, \$800 million, whatever, to look at it and say, oh, my gosh, I've got to come up with all that money at one time.

So what I would like to do is break it into fundable pieces much like what we did for I-49 North. We had \$50 million segment pieces and we just kept chipping away, persevered, and we got it done.

So looking at that for the I-10 corridor, what are some pieces that we can do? We have got to go through the feasibility, then the environmental stage, then design. We are looking at, going back to the Washington Street exit, we are studying what can we do there. One of the ideas is putting the exit further back before you get to where the I-10/I-110 merge, so that when people are coming from north Baton Rouge, want to exit off at Washington Street, they don't have to cross over traffic with people coming off the interstate.

We are also looking at a possibility of putting the Washington Street exit and relocating it on the left side. So I'm not saying that modifying the Washington Street exit would not help the situation, it would, it's just if you closed it, you would see no relief in the traffic. You would still see that backup along I-10.

We have got to do more than that. We have got to look at all the corridor. I am very much, being the engineer that I am, on looking at data and looking at traffic modeling and that's what we are looking at. And so I advocate to all of you that when we have the public meeting, let's really look at the data and really have a heart-to-heart discussion on what is it going to take to improve traffic along that corridor.

Senator VITTER. Great. Let me ask all of the others, since you're all at least generally familiar with this area and that issue. You know, we are going to have this process, not trying to pre-judge anything, but based on what you have seen and studied, what do you think might be viable, partial solutions for a work-around Baton Rouge, a partial loop, whatever you want to call it, including Roy has already started that discussion with his suggestion relating to the Sunshine Bridge, including that or anything else.

Mr. QUEZAIRE. If I could, it's been a logistical nightmare and motorist frustration, I mean, it's just escalated to the sky and beyond. I think what we need to look at is something that is viable, it's doable, it makes common sense, and it does not cost over a billion dollars to do.

We have a \$12 billion backlog and kudos to the State and the Department for reducing that from \$15 billion to \$12 billion, of actual projects that's been designed and I mean and—not shelved, but basically on the shelf. And to the average citizen, that's never, ever, ever land as far as happening, conceptually speaking.

However, if we actually segued off and look at the west bank, west side of the Mississippi River between Port Allen and Donaldsonville, the Sunshine Bridge, there was a study, a feasibility study that was conducted by the Department in 2011, not that many years ago, and at that time, the price tag or the forecast was all inclusive of the engineering design, the environmental, right-of-way acquisition and utility relocation and construction of \$38 million. To me, that's more practical. It's something that you can actually see that has a better chance of happening as compared to a 1 point whatever billion dollar project.

I think also with the economic forecast that has been given the last quarter of last year, I think our Louisiana Department of Economic Development came forth with a forecast between Baton Rouge and Mississippi River and New Orleans, within the Mississippi River corridor that there would be somewhere between 70, 68 to 72, \$74 billion of industrial expansions between that area, Baton Rouge and New Orleans in oncoming years.

But guess what? For foreign investment, foreign direct investment dollars and venture capital to come into an area, guess what they look at? Infrastructure. Is it suitable? Is it practical? Is it doable for us to put a business, plant our money here and get a great return on that investment?

So we have to be conscious and aware of how we have to posture ourselves as a State, as a region, in particular, since we are here in Baton Rouge, but that—that infrastructure, the present infrastructure will be challenged more and more as we go.

Diverting the traffic, you're again—one of the individuals that gave testimony today said that it's the truckers don't even think about coming this way. How many dollars have we lost as a result of not having the adequate infrastructure and the frustration of sitting on that I-10 bridge.

West Baton Rouge Parish President Berthelot has been a champion for years talking about segueing off that to 415 and bringing it over and tying it over to LA 1. I think those things are doable and, again, \$38 million in 2011 maybe is \$40-something million now, but it's a far cheaper price tag than looking at some of the mega-projects that have been shelved and will probably stay shelved for quite some time until we can bring forth enough dollars to resolve it.

Senator VITTER. Ken. Joey.

Mr. PERRET. Secretary LeBas is exactly correct when she says you need to build support for any kind of mega-project like the I-10 improvement is going to be. Back in 2000/2001, when I first came back to Louisiana, we were working on the same project, Eric Kalivoda, Deputy Secretary, was deeply involved in it. We were that close to having a solution that would have improved the project, improved the flow of traffic and not affected hardly any property owners. What happened? The political support was not

there, and a small group of influential people who lived in the corridor convinced the political leadership that it shouldn't be built.

Senator VITTER. What was that solution broad brush? I mean, just broad brush.

Mr. PERRET. It was to expand, add additional lanes and to change some of the interchanges so they would work better. And reroute, I think we had, at that time, planned to reroute the Washington, as Secretary said, to a left off so it wouldn't conflict with the oncoming traffic.

Another thing, what's presented to the public is very important because at that time they had a model of the improvement that was a beautiful model, but it was so big, the model itself was so big that it scared people. They thought it was going to destroy their neighborhoods. They saw this big model of the improvement. It really was just demonstrating, you know, what the features were going to be.

So we have got to be very careful when dealing with the public that they don't get false ideas and start rumors about what is going to happen. They need to be given facts about what is going to happen and how they will be impacted and the impacts have to be minimized, especially the impacts on business.

Senator VITTER. Ken, just so I understand, what you're describing did not involve a partial loop or work-around Baton Rouge?

Mr. PERRET. No, it was providing additional lanes off the bridge so you had two through lanes coming off the bridge. That would have moved the traffic on through to College and then out to I-10. So I think the secretary is absolutely right, we need to build political and citizen support for whatever is being planned.

Now there is another plan in the works that involves private/public partnerships, which would be our first effort in Louisiana, and that's a project called Baton Rouge BUMP, which is basically coming across the 190 bridge, the old bridge, and doing some improvements to Airline Highway to make it like a freeway all the way down to I-12. So that's being studied right now by Louisiana Transportation Authority under DOTD to see if that's—if that private partnership can work. And of course, it would involve a toll, tolling facilities and investments there, but I think that's an alternate that really needs to be looked at carefully and is being looked at right now.

Senator VITTER. Joey, any comments?

Mr. COCO. Yes. So one of the thoughts that I have related to this subject kind of segues from what Ken had just mentioned is that the public support on this is so important and it has to be craftful.

The power right now of social media, and I'm of the generation of social media, you know, I have been on Facebook for probably 10 years now, so to kind of give you an idea. But, you know, every day, we have social media being used to let us know when there's problems on the bridge here in Baton Rouge, there's notices that come out from, you know, the local media that sends a notice, hey, you know, there's a wreck on the bridge, and it's closed.

Those types of things and leveraging that information that's coming from the social media network can be used to start to sway the masses to understand that this is an investment that everyone has to make, we all have to chip in, we all have to pay for this problem.

If we don't, the consequences of doing nothing are going to be greater in the end. Our plants in the West Baton Rouge and Iberville side and folks that travel from the East Baton Rouge side to those locations or those folks that live in that area that are in West Baton Rouge and Iberville trying to travel to East Baton Rouge to work, the whole system is going to shut down if we don't really significantly invest in it.

It's unacceptable when you have, you know, 5 miles of I-12 and I-10 waiting to get on the bridge of three lanes wide, you do the math, you end up with 15,000 cars sitting there with two or three people in the car maybe. It's really amazing to see how many folks are impacted at one time by these events.

To really leverage social media and try to get people talking about it, get the conversation going, it's really an interesting time and I think that it's a component that we could all improve on to say this is what we need to do. We need to really invest in this infrastructure in this area. If we don't, the consequences are going to be even greater.

Senator VITTER. Before we move on, anybody have any specific reaction to Roy's Sunshine Bridge related idea?

Ms. LEBAS. I would like to add if I could.

Senator VITTER. Sure.

Ms. LEBAS. I appreciate all the comments. I think they hit on a lot of the projects that we have been discussing and working on. Just add a couple more. We have proceeded with the Sunshine Bridge. The I-10, 22, LA 22, LA 70, we are surveying that, moving forward with designing a four-lane all the way to the Sunshine Bridge so that would help in the effort that you're talking about. We don't have construction money identified, but we are moving forward with pre-construction.

Another project that we are doing a feasibility study on a new Mississippi River bridge crossing. It would be in between the new bridge, Horace Wilkinson Bridge, and the Sunshine Bridge. I'm of the opinion that we do need another bridge crossing in between those two bridges along with all that we have been talking about. And even with those improvements, the Mississippi River bridge, improving flow on the Sunshine Bridge, the BUMP project that Ken mentioned, the LA 1 improvements that Roy Quezaire mentioned, I do want to say that our traffic studies show that even with those improvements, we still would have that bottleneck on the I-10 corridor.

So even with all of those, we need to fix the part of the new bridge here in Baton Rouge but also continue looking, studying, looking at traffic modeling to see what is that best next or complementary project that can help with the overall traffic flow.

Senator VITTER. Right. Right. OK. Roy, since you're with the port, you certainly talked about ports, let me ask you. We mentioned I-49, one of the participants from the audience mentioned I-49 South. I assume getting that done to a significant extent and eventually completed would have a big positive impact on all of our south Louisiana ports. Have you all quantified that at all or have a sense of what that could mean for our port activity?

Mr. QUEZAIRE. Well, from a conceptual perspective, we all embrace the idea of that actually being a reality one day. Quite natu-

rally with the coastal ports and those five major ports, which is the largest port complex in the Western Hemisphere from Baton Rouge down the Mississippi River to New Orleans, Plaquemines and St. Bernard, quite naturally having I-49 as an easier access route will certainly enhance our availability of moving products and cargo. So yes, we wholeheartedly embrace it. We have not yet even begun to talk about the financial part of it, but yes, it's a great concept. We certainly would welcome it.

Senator VITTER. Right. Finally, let me ask in general, tolling. As I said, tolling can and should be an important piece of the puzzle, but we are not, in terms of population and traffic count, we are not the northeast corridor, we are not Houston, we are not greater Dallas. What is the realistic potential for that to be a significant piece of major projects and where would be projects where it could be a major positive funding factor?

Mr. PERRET. The problem with tolls, Senator, is you have to have the volume of traffic and you have to have the constriction that traffic has to use a certain point to be able to collect the tolls.

When I was with DOTD, about the only viable area where you could use toll financing was in the New Orleans area because you have the higher traffic volumes around the West Bank and that kind of thing. But certainly toll financing can be a component, can be a part of a project. It's not enough traffic here—we have congestion, but we don't the high volumes like they have in Texas.

So it has to be, tolling has to be used in combination with other financing methods to supplement it. It may be 20 percent or 30 percent of the project can be paid by tolls, you know, along with, you know, other kind of funding that comes from the State, and local and even the local governments can come up with ways to raise money. A tax improvement district could be formed to—that's going to be developing because of the toll road and so you could have property taxes to help pay for it. So you need a combination of funds with toll roads.

Mr. QUEZAIRE. From the conversations I have been involved in through the years that, at best, tolls would probably at its best would probably bring maybe one-third of the total cost to the table as far as revenue income. I mean, we are maybe stretching it a little saying one-third. But it would have to be a series of components plus tolls that would make the project doable.

Mr. PERRET. I would like to add one thing. On the national level, when you all are reconsidering reauthorization is that the Highway Trust Fund for many years was adequate for funding the interstate system, but what happened is the—it was—it's a flat tax that doesn't go up when the price of gas goes up. As inflation increased, it just has lost its value.

But in addition to that, there's been so many bells and whistles that have been hung on the Highway Trust Fund that weren't originally in the original intent. Original intent was to do construction of roads and bridges and a lot of these programs are worthy projects, worthy programs, but to fund them out of the Highway Trust Fund takes money away from the basic needs of the system to do highway and bridge rehabilitation.

So I think that needs to be looked at at a national level as to if these programs are worthy, they should be funded from the gen-

eral fund and let the Highway Trust Fund concentrate on the basic needs of the system.

Senator VITTER. I certainly agree with that. I've continually pushed to move those sorts of things out of the highway program and the Highway Trust Fund to sort of rededicate and refocus use of trust fund dollars, whatever they are, they are scarce, they are always going to be—we are never going to have too much of it. So I think we really need to be focused in that way. I agree with that.

OK. We are going to wrap up here. Thank you all very much for coming out. And let's give a big round of applause to our panel of witnesses. Thank you all very much.

Appreciate it. This is obviously an ongoing conversation. So please stay in touch with me and my office about all of these issues, including real specific observations or recommendations that you make in your neighborhood and areas you travel, needs that you have. Please get those to us.

As you walked in, you got a handout. The blue column on the left-hand side of the handout is all of my contact information, including our office right here in Baton Rouge. Please keep that handy.

At the top, also, is my website which has easy e-mail access. Please keep that handy and continue to be in touch with me about all of these serious traffic congestion issues.

Thank you all very much. Our field hearing is adjourned.

